DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 258 745 RC 015 306

AUTHOR Karon, James P.
TITLE Maintaining Comprehensive High School Programs in a Time of Declining Enrollment.
PUB DATE 23 May 85
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the "Small Schools Conference" (Bristol, RI, May 23, 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Articulation (Education); *Curriculum Development; Declining Enrollment; *Delivery Systems; Educational Cooperation; *Educational Strategies; Educational Technology; *High Schools; Interdisciplinary Approach; Program Content; Rural Education; *Secondary Education; *Secondary School Curriculum; *Small Schools; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Rhode Island

ABSTRACT

Using information from relevant literature and recent surveys and interviews with administrators of many of Rhode Island's smaller school districts, the report identifies options/strategies which may be useful in counteracting the potential adverse effects that low, or significantly declining, enrollments may have on the comprehensiveness of a district's high school program. The options are grouped into four tables which include the perceived advantages/disadvantages of each approach and comments relevant to Rhode Island schools. Table 1 outlines nine "in-house" options for maintaining a broad curriculum: expanded grade range, combined related courses, alternate-year offerings, multiple certification of teachers, interdisciplinary courses, increased student course load, innovative instructional delivery, independent study, and flexible minimum enrollment policies. Table 2 presents five options for using business, cultural, and postsecondary education resources to maintain a broad curriculum: use of community resources, correspondence courses, expanded school mission, concurrent high school and postsecondary enrollment, and early college enrollment. Table 3 describes seven inter-district cooperative strategies and regionalization as curriculum maintaining methods: cross-registration, joint program offerings, specialized regional schools/agencies, itinerant teachers, tuition/voucher arrangements, support function cooperation, and consolidation/regionalization. Table 4 covers application of three new technologies to maintain a broad curriculum: taped or "over-air" instructional television, computer-assisted instruction, and interactive telecommunications. (NEC)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED258745

# MAINTAINING COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS IN A TIME OF DECLINING ENROLLMENT

by James P. Karon

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

James P. Karon

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PAPER PREPARED FOR THE

"SMALL SCHOOLS CONFERENCE"

BRISTOL, RHODE ISLAND

MAY 23, 1985

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

✓ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

J. Troy Earhart, Commissioner
Rhode Island Department of Education
22 Hayes Street
Providence, RI 02908

RC015306

TABLE OF CONTENTS


| | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| INTRODUCTION . . . . . | | 1 |
| Table 1 | IN-HOUSE OPTIONS FOR MAINTAINING A BROAD CURRICULUM | 2 |
| Table 2 | OPTIONS FOR MAINTAINING A BROAD CURRICULUM USING THE COMMUNITY OF BUSINESS, CULTURE, AND POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION. . . . . | 6 |
| Table 3 | INTER-DISTRICT COOPERATIVE STRATEGIES AND REGIONALIZATION AS METHODS FOR MAINTAINING A BROAD CURRICULUM . . . . . | 8 |
| Table 4 | APPLICATION OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES FOR MAINTAINING A BROAD CURRICULUM . . . . . | 11 |
| RESPONSE FORM | | |

# MAINTAINING COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS IN A TIME OF DECLINING ENROLLMENT

## INTRODUCTION

This report identifies options/strategies which may be useful in counteracting the potential adverse effects that low, or significantly declining, enrollment may have on the comprehensiveness of a district's high school program. Information was gathered from relevant literature and from recent surveys and interviews with administrators of many of Rhode Island's smaller school districts.

The options for coping with small or declining enrollments are grouped into four tables: (1) "in-house" options; (2) options involving interaction with the community and postsecondary education; (3) cooperative strategies among districts; and (4) applications of new technologies. For each option, indications are given as to perceived advantages and disadvantages. In some cases, additional comments are also provided.

If you have additional views on the advantages or disadvantages of these options, please fill out and mail the response form at the end of the document. Information on where these options are in use, or have been used, would be appreciated.

Table 1

IN-HOUSE OPTIONS FOR MAINTAINING A BROAD CURRICULUM

| OPTION | POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES | COMMENT |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Expanded Grade Range<br>The range of grades taught at one facility is broadened as in expanding a grade 9-12 high school to a grade 7-12 junior-senior high school. | Advantages<br>Facilitates cross-grade enrollments in some subjects.<br>Provides an opportunity for increased utilization of staff.<br>Efficiencies are achieved by sharing core facilities, administrators, and support personnel.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>Daily interaction of students at different phases of social development. | Many of Rhode Island's small schools operate as junior-senior high schools. |
| 2. Related Courses Combined<br>Combine the teaching of related courses in the same classroom. An example would be the combined teaching of French III and French IV. | Advantages<br>Courses are held which otherwise would have been cancelled.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>Less relevant or appropriate instructional time is available for each student. | Rhode Island's smaller schools frequently employ this option in the area of foreign languages. Use in other subject areas is low. |

Table 1 (Cont.)

IN-HOUSE OPTIONS FOR MAINTAINING A BROAD CURRICULUM

| OPTION | POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES | COMMENT |
|---|---|---|
| 3. Alternate-Year Offerings<br>A particular course is offered every other year. | Advantages<br>Demand for a course may "backlog" during the off-cycle year, making enrollment demand higher.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>An alternate year system is not feasible for most sequential and core courses. Student-to-student communication on course suggestions is reduced for alternate year courses. | Alternate-year offerings are heavily used in higher education; this strategy is not widely used among Rhode Island's smaller secondary schools. |
| 4. Multiple Certification of Teachers<br>Recruit or retrain staff to attain teachers with instructional strengths in two or more disciplinary areas. | Advantages<br>The possibility that a course will not be offered because a certified staff person is not available to teach a course will be reduced.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>Technical certification which has not been practiced for many years may be instructionally less effective. | Interviews with administrators in Rhode Island found that all do not have current information on multiple certifications held by teachers. |
| 5. Interdisciplinary Courses<br>An interdisciplinary course combines the content and perspective of two or more disciplinary areas into a single course offering. | Advantages<br>Courses which cannot be run separately (for example, Art History) may be delivered to students as part of an interdisciplinary course (for example, History and Culture).<br><br>Disadvantages<br>Breadth of coverage of a course is likely to be reduced in an interdisciplinary format. | None |

Table 1 (Cont.)

IN-HOUSE OPTIONS FOR MAINTAINING A BROAD CURRICULUM

| OPTION | POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES | COMMENT |
|---|---|---|
| 6. Increased Student Course Load<br>By increasing credit requirements or increasing the number of instructional periods per day, students are encouraged to take a larger number of total courses. | Advantages<br>If more courses are taken, many students will have available slots to take elective courses or less popular courses.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>If credit requirements are highly restrictive, options for students may not increase.<br>A larger number of courses can result in reduced attention to each course by students. | None |
| 7. Innovative Modes of Instructional Delivery<br>Allow a combination of large group lectures, independent team projects or other non-traditional formats. | Advantages<br>Teaching time may be used more effectively when options for delivery of education are flexible.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>Not identified. | None |
| 8. Independent Study<br>Students study a course independently under the guidance of a staff supervisor. | Advantages<br>Students are able to take a course which is either not offered, or which conflicts with another course that must be taken.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>Independent study lacks the advantages of direct teacher instruction and classroom interaction. | Independent study is in use by several of Rhode Island's smaller districts. Scheduling conflicts are often the stimulus which leads to use of independent study. |

Table 1 (Cont.)

IN-HOUSE OPTIONS FOR MAINTAINING A BROAD CURRICULUM

| OPTION | POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES | COMMENT |
|---|---|---|
| 9. Flexible Policy on Minimum Enrollment<br>Using a locally defined process, allow certain courses to be conducted with very low enrollments. | Advantages<br>Courses considered important for a high quality educational program are available to students.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>The unit or per-pupil cost of operating the educational program may increase. | The availability of a teacher sometimes impinges on the decision to offer a low enrollment course or section. |

Table 2

OPTIONS FOR MAINTAINING A BROAD CURRICULUM USING THE COMMUNITY OF BUSINESS, CULTURE, AND POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

| OPTION | POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES | COMMENT |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Use of Community Resources<br>Expand the school into community sites or bring teachers from the community into the school. | Advantages<br>Duplication of facilities and equipment in one community is avoided.<br>Specialized instructors may be used on a part-time basis to enhance the educational program.<br>Student involvement in a "real-world" environment can have motivational and educational benefits.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>Certification requirements may reduce the feasibility of this option. | None |
| 2. Correspondence Courses<br>Packaged courses mailed by other institutions are taken by individual students. | Advantages<br>The range of courses available to a student is enormously broadened.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>The quality, cost, and supervision of correspondence courses are potential drawbacks. | None |
| 3. Expanded School Mission<br>The resources of the high school are used to teach segments of the population not traditionally served by the high school. This could include dropouts, business employees, retired persons, etc. | Advantages<br>By adding clients, the school can maintain a larger curriculum and employ a larger and more varied staff of teachers.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>Not identified. | Some would argue that the mission of the schools is already too broad. The effectiveness of teaching high school students in the company of other population segments (one variation of this option) is open to question. |

Table 2 (Cont.)

OPTIONS FOR MAINTAINING A BROAD CURRICULUM USING THE COMMUNITY OF BUSINESS, CULTURE, AND POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

| OPTION | POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES | COMMENT |
|---|---|---|
| 4. Concurrent High School and Postsecondary Enrollment<br>With concurrent enrollment, students earn credit at both a high school and a specific postsecondary institution. This is somewhat different from "advanced placement" courses where credit-transfer is considered only upon later application to a college. | Advantages<br>Concurrent enrollment at a postsecondary site removes the course enrollment barrier that high school programs face.<br>A concurrent enrollment course delivered at a high school site may increase the popularity of a course, thus increasing the probability that it can be offered.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>Students may need to pay tuition for courses and provide their own transportation to college sites. | In districts surveyed for this study, concurrent enrollment courses are usually taught by high school staff at the high school. Individual colleges approve courses and teachers for this purpose. |
| 5. Early College Enrollment<br>Students leave high school a semester or year early in order to enroll in a post-secondary program. Typically, the student will have achieved the required number of courses to graduate except for a fourth year of English which is waived as long as an equivalent English course is to be taken at college. | Advantages<br>High school seniors are given the opportunity to advance to postsecondary level courses.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>Not identified. | This option, if used extensively may reduce the high school's ability to offer its own advanced programs. |

Table 3

INTER-DISTRICT COOPERATIVE STRATEGIES AND REGIONALIZATION
AS METHODS FOR MAINTAINING A BROAD CURRICULUM

| OPTION | POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES | COMMENT |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Cross-Registration<br>Allow students to enroll in courses in neighboring districts for courses that are not available in their home school. | Advantages<br>Students have a broader range of courses available to them.<br>Districts may develop programming depth in a particular area and have access to the program strengths of neighboring districts.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>Transportation of students making individual course selections may not be practical. | None |
| 2. Joint Program Offerings<br>Two or more districts act together on a specific basis basis to offer a course or program. One district may become the "district of record" or a joint collaborative may be established with its own administrative procedures. | Advantages<br>Courses with too low a demand to be offered by individual districts may be feasible if offered jointly by two or more districts.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>Transportation of students. | In Rhode Island, special (handicapped) education programs have used this option to some degree. |

Table 3 (Cont.)

INTER-DISTRICT COOPERATIVE STRATEGIES AND REGIONALIZATION
AS METHODS FOR MAINTAINING A BROAD CURRICULUM

| OPTION | POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES | COMMENT |
|---|---|---|
| 3. Specialized Regional Schools or Regional Education Agencies<br>Specialized programs are offered at regional schools serving subpopulations of component districts. A regional school for the arts would be an example. Alternatively, a regional education agency could provide or coordinate programs for component districts. | Advantages<br>A regional school has a greater population base, allowing it to offer greater depth in a program area than would be possible at the individual high schools within the region. Programs offered by a regional education agency also benefit from this larger population base.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>Not identified. | Rhode Island has a significant network of regional vocational schools. |
| 4. Itinerant Teachers<br>In contrast to the transportation of students, teachers travel to two or more districts to teach courses. | Advantages<br>A teacher specialized in a subject such as physics or Latin may be better utilized when shared by several districts.<br>The transportation of teachers is logistically easier than the transportation of students.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>Because districts have different contracts and pay structures, forging mutual agreements can be an administrative burden. | This strategy may be a component of either cooperative or regional agency programs as described above |
| 5. Tuition or "Voucher" Arrangements<br>Districts too small to maintain a comprehensive high school program may "tuition" their students to specific neighboring districts or provide parents with education vouchers to allow their children to attend public or private schools of their choice. | Advantages<br>Students generally receive greater educational opportunities than would be true at a small local school.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>Students may spend more time travelling.<br>Community control of education is lessened. | None |

Table 3 (Cont.)

INTER-DISTRICT COOPERATIVE STRATEGIES AND REGIONALIZATION AS METHODS FOR MAINTAINING A BROAD CURRICULUM

| OPTION | POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES | COMMENT |
|---|---|---|
| 6. Cooperation in the Provision of Support Functions<br>Districts cooperate or regionalize in the area of support functions such as administrative computer services, purchasing, or transportation of students. | Advantages<br>Cost efficiencies can preserve monies for the support of a more extensive curriculum.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>Not identified. | None |
| 7. Consolidation/Regionalization<br>Districts merge to become larger administrative units, reducing the number of individual high school programs. | Advantages<br>Remaining high schools have more comprehensive programs.<br>Some administrative economies may occur.<br>Educational equity among subregions is increased.<br>Disadvantages<br>Reduction in local control of education. | Two of Rhode Island's high schools operate as regional schools. |

Table 4

APPLICATION OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES FOR MAINTAINING A BROAD CURRICULUM

| OPTION | POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES | COMMENT |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Taped or "Over-the-Air" Instructional Television<br>Prepared programs are transmitted for television reception or video -taped programs are purchased, rented, shared, or created for instructional use. | Advantages<br>Curriculum opportunities are broadened.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>Not identified. | The ability to control scheduling has improved the attractiveness of this option. |
| 2. Computer-Assisted Instruction<br>Student instruction is directed by computer programs with students at individual work stations. | Advantages<br>Curriculum opportunities are broadened.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>Quality and effectiveness cannot be assumed.<br>Teacher and classroom interaction are reduced. | This field is rapidly developing and improving. |
| 3. Interactive Telecommunication<br>Technologies, such as cable and satellite communications, allow interaction between instructors and students who may be at several locations. Interaction may just have an audio component, but, ideally, it would have, in addition, one-way or two-way video capabilities. | Advantages<br>Curriculum opportunities are broadened.<br><br>Disadvantages<br>These technologies still have significant financial costs. | These technologies are rapidly developing and can now be considered as real options. |

RESPONSE FORM

Your name: _____
District: _____
Telephone: _____

Your experience and opinions regarding the options listed in this report are desired. Please provide any information which you feel would enhance this report. Specific references regarding the use of options would be appreciated as well.

Option: _____ _____

Comments:

Option: _____

Comments:

Option: _____

Comments:

Please mail this response form to:

Dr. James P. Karon
Division of Planning and Evaluation
Rhode Island Department of Education
22 Hayes Street
Providence, RI 02908

Thank you.